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Pastoral and Professional Misconduct: An Abuse Of Power

Four years ago I spent the hot sunny days of summer studying Pastoral and Professional Ethics at Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary in Fresno, Calif. From theory to practice the topic remains hot! The striking reality is a growing

number of women who have disclosed their violation and victimization in pastoral or professional relationships. It must be named—the sexualized abuse of power and position.

This issue of *Report* attempts to describe some of the many facets of pain and destruction in the lives of persons entangled in this web of pastoral and professional misconduct. In the past three years of practice, I have encountered women who have been violated by men in trusted roles—from evangelical minister, to Catholic priest, to university professor, to military padre, to Bible college instructor, preacher and mentor.

Quite recently I listened to unsettling reports about a youth pastor from a young friend. My first tendency was to minimize. More reports of sexualized language, inappropriate admiration, an independent style, excessive control and a disrespect for clearly-stated boundaries were ample signs to begin an investigation process. We cannot assume the church is a safe place.

When a person with a specific need, who is perhaps vulnerable or in crisis, looks for help from someone more knowledgeable, trained and supposedly competent and compassionate, it is expected that the professional (pastor, teacher, counsellor, doctor, etc.) will act in the best interest of the person seeking assistance. Relationships with trusted professionals hold inordinate power over people's lives because they offer hope in a hurting situation. Consequently, it is natural for the recipient to experience the reawakening of dependency needs. In such circumstances it is always the responsibility of the person with the positional power to maintain appropriate personal boundaries. Dr. Peter Rutter equates these violations of emotional, physical and sexual boundaries in professional relationships not only as rape but also as incest. How much greater is the devastation in our faith communities where we so freely speak of the family of God, acknowledging one another as brothers and sisters.

For women who have experienced the travesty of professional misconduct, confusion is paramount. They fear shattering a relationship that was construed as hopeful. From the specialness and nurture that was initially part of the relationship, they begin to feel responsible for the needs and demands of the professional. The following quotes are illustrative:

"I trusted and believed in him. I was thankful at first for what he did for me. He really seemed to understand me."



"He started to tell me his troubles, and the burden was heavy. Then he made me feel like I had to comfort him, to have sex with him. I feel so obligated. I try to avoid the sex, but then I feel so guilty because he needs me too."

"He told me we had to keep our relationship a secret because of what it might do. I feel trapped because he threatens suicide if I talk to anyone else about our sexual relationship." (The California Therapist, Nov/Dec 1989)

Like rape and incest victims, these women tend to blame themselves. In addition, victims are riddled with overwhelming feelings of depression, fear, anxiety, guilt and shame.

Whenever the pastoral/professional relationship involves the crossing of sexual boundaries, the conduct is not only immoral, it is also unethical, unprofessional and may be illegal. Anglican Archbishop Michael Peers noted that this "deep-rooted and dark" problem is often protected by the twin demons of "denial and control."

A new ethical code for the church must be formulated, one where truth and justice seek to empower those among us who have been violated and victimized. We must have the courage to name the offense, recognize its prevalence, outline a process for justice, and discover ways to healing and restoration. In continuing our theme of shedding light on darkness, I want to thank the contributors for their courage to confront the darkness so we all can see more clearly.

—Vange Willms Thiessen, compiler

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Information Regarding Professional Sexual Misconduct

Definition: Professional sexual misconduct is characterized by the violation of a professional role; the misuse of authority and power; the exploitation of vulnerability and trust by crossing sexual boundaries; and the lack of mutual consent.

1. A professional is a person functioning in a role which is differentiated by knowledge, skill, training, status, authority and power.
2. The professional relationship is based on trust and the expectation that the person with the greater power will act in the best interest of the person with lesser power, who is often needy, vulnerable and dependent. The person in the professional role is responsible to maintain the ethical boundaries at all times.
3. Sexual misconduct refers to sexual contact (sexual intercourse and/or fondling of intimate parts such as genitals, buttocks, groins, or breasts), oral sex, nudity, kissing, hugging, direct or indirect propositioning, and sexually suggestive remarks or innuendos. This kind of sexual behavior by a professional is unethical, unprofessional and illegal.
4. There is no authentic consent when an unequal balance of power exists. Meaningful consent requires mutuality, choice and equality. Tactics of secrecy, bribes, coercion, violence and threats of harm to self and others interfere with authentic consent.

Profile of an Offender:

1. The offending professional often possesses community respect and regard, a strong leadership image, personal charm and charisma.
2. The initial contact is cleverly and intentionally orchestrated by the perpetrator to gain access via the professional role.
3. Once access is established, the relationship is construed as a mutual peer relationship and a "special friendship."

**"Yes, why did I? How could I?
There are no questions I
haven't asked myself."**

by Elsie K. Neufeld

Recovering From Soul Rape

It's been 330 days since I disclosed my dark secret; I was victimized by a "man of God," an ordained minister and college professor. I will call him Cain. Cain called me "friend," his "special friend," the one he'd searched for all his life. I was unspeakably flattered to be his "chosen." At his suggestion, we made a life-long "friendship covenant."

Very quickly—too quickly—he became my mentor, counselor, literary agent and, in his words, "supporting cast." And I? Cain said I was his "grace-giver," "wounded healer," "true friend," and "Christ."

He gave me a poem about a butterfly, and said, "you are free as a butterfly." He gave me butterfly gifts: a gold pendant, soap, pretty tins, tree ornaments... Later, I discovered the poem and butterfly gifts were given also to his other "special friends." Ask me how cheap feels.

Cain said he hoped he wasn't crowding me. He also said he couldn't live without me, and that, once in, there was no way out of the friendship. After the sexual violations, no, not only after—before and during, too—he often alluded to suicide. "Suicide threats should be taken seriously, especially if the person has a plan." I read that in the library one hot Saturday afternoon, the day after Cain threatened to use a knife in my kitchen when I refused his advances. Yes, Cain was specific: the bridge, the rafters in his bedroom, a knife...

And so, I didn't tell. I swore on my life: "I will *never* tell." And I didn't, not at first. After the "inappropriate" stopped and I went on antidepressants, the dark memories got lost in the fog. We became friends, best friends. Until. Until 18 months later, when I reduced the dosage. That's when the light began to crack the darkness. I had nightmares and insomnia. My heart raced and hurt terribly. I was irritable, and terrified. And then, three and a half years after we'd first begun relating, I told.

People ask: "Wasn't there someone you could have told?" "Why didn't you just say no?" "Why did you stay?" and the worst, "You went back after he sexually violated you?!" At first I tried to answer. But every explanation sounded stupid. Yes, why did I? How could I? There are no questions I



4. The relationship most often includes the giving and receiving of significant and symbolic gifts.
5. The perpetrator presents personal neediness, such as sexual unfulfillment, marital dissatisfaction, feeling misunderstood by friends and colleagues, lack of acknowledgement or appreciation of special talents or abilities, etc. This in turn leads to confiding in the victim and setting up expectations of emotional support and caretaking.
6. There is usually coercion to maintain secrecy, which may include threats of harm to others or of suicidal intention.
7. The patterns of sexual misconduct may continue over many years and include multiple victims.
8. The perpetrator will tend to minimize, distort and deny the extent of intention and involvement.
9. The sexual addictive behavior is a profound disorder and is often related to a deficiency beginning in childhood. Years of intensive treatment and supervision are required for rehabilitation and restoration.

Compiled from multiple resources by Vange Thiessen

"Recovery is intentional and time-consuming. Attitude is critical. A thousand times I said, 'I will make it.'"

haven't asked myself. Intelligence is a two-edged sword. It didn't save me from or spare me this experience. But I like to think it helped me survive.

Telling made it worse! I never knew that dark could be so dark. "Disclosure shock," that's what telling brought me. Mind and feelings, planets apart. Intellectually—yes!; emotionally, no! Several weeks later, I overdosed. "When you swore on your life not to tell, you put a curse on yourself," is how a psychiatrist explained my act.

Relief was *not* immediate. How casually we quote Christ's words, "The Truth shall set you free." Yet how terribly agonizing the reality! Truth hurts! Light blinds! The road to freedom, steep and wearing. And *costly*! Recovery is an over and over again journey. Often messy. With a beginning and a middle, but not, I think, an end. We, all of us, are constantly in recovery. From birth we plod along, trying to recover who we are, who we were meant to be. Exiled people, Eden-bent, bound by earthliness, by our humanity. Yet accompanied—assisted—by God. And that makes all the difference. Suddenly, difficulties become adventures. There is choice!

Recovery is a lesson. It's about light killing darkness, about hostages being freed, soaring to the heavens. Recovery is intentional and time-consuming. Attitude is critical. A thousand times I said, "I will make it." I said it out loud, I whispered it into the night, I wrote it in my journal, and I prayed it. And when the darkness froze my tongue and paralyzed my will, others said it for me. Many, many times, I borrowed their confidence.

For a long while after terminating with Cain, I felt cursed. "You are me," he'd said so often. No, I am not him. "*I am not him!*" I screamed, wrote and cried it. He forecast what disclosure would bring: gloom, silence, marriage breakdown, friendlessness.... His grip tortured. Sharing my story is a way of disempowering the curses. Only a few remain.

Recovery is an imaginative process. At first I lived one minute at a time. Pain ruled. Then slowly I dared myself to imagine its absence. I drew on past experiences of loss and reminded myself that back then, tomorrow did become easier. Tears gave way to laughter. Fear gave way to risking.

I planted a wildflower garden. The weeds and clods of dirt received my anger without retaliation. The earth smiled, it seemed, as though my digging and planting were a tickling. Flowers were laughter incarnate. Only journaling sparked more healing than that tiny plot of beauty and solace.

Walking regularly also healed. Some days the black asphalt, my footsteps and breathing were my primary focus. But most often, I lost myself in the beauty of my surroundings. The seasons mirrored my life: the falling; the harsh and icy cold reality; the birth; and finally, harvest time!

Recovery has many acts. Rituals helped. At first, of course, memory stages an ongoing repeat of the past. Time is suspended. It feels endless. In time, "act one" becomes redundant. I changed props. Recorded the memories in order to discard. I visited the "sites" where we'd been and purged the ghosts: the ocean, the bookstore, the monastery.... I went to the place where Cain said he'd end his life, and burnt the word-lined cards and letters he penned to me. I smashed a pretty vase and tin he gave me. And wrote and wrote again. Slowly, my focus bent toward the present, and the future. "I am mining the rubble of my past," I wrote in my journal. "I want to take what is good, and leave behind the bad."

Recovery is lonely. One needs assistance. I saw a psychologist. She became a guide and director. Often I wished she'd make decisions for me. But she didn't. She emphasized self-care, challenged, and affirmed. Hers was a safe office. I sensed no repulsion. Shame was refused entry. My husband and friends also helped. They encouraged me, refused to let me sink into feelings of unworthiness. "You're on the right road," they said over and over. They sent flowers, hugged and held me, and loved me back to life when I felt my life was of no consequence. They said they needed me. They said I was special, had integrity and worthwhile opinions.

But there was one thing they could not give me, one thing I craved for desperately: kin. Someone to say, "I've been there." It took nine months. Words cannot describe the relief, the release from my still strong sense that I was somehow defective to have participated in such a twisted relationship. My "sister" pointed out the difference between an "affair" and what I'd experienced. She named it: victimization, abuse. And even though we spoke by telephone, across thousands of miles, I was stunned into a healthier perspective. Suddenly, I knew I wasn't crazy.

Soon thereafter, I finally met two of Cain's other victims. Why didn't anyone "connect" us earlier? Those who heard Cain's "confession" had a list of names! Yet no one initiated contact or asked, "What happened?" It was only on my initiative, one year after my disclosure, that we were given opportunity to tell our stories. That still cuts deeply! Though I found it nearly impossible to forgive myself, in some ways I find it even more difficult to forgive the "men of God" who

stood by so impotently. If we had been children, would the church have acted sooner? Answers elude me.

Recovery has taught me a lot about myself. It has taught me that it is more important to be true to myself than to seek the approval of others. I'm an impatient person, but one anxious to learn from life. I am an angry person, but that means I have lots of energy—potentially creative energy.

I've become better acquainted with grace—God's, other people's and my own. In this area, it's easier for me to give than to receive. Being gracious with myself means that sometimes it's all right to indulge in eating, weeping, staring, napping—for an hour, a day, or even a week, as long as necessary.

A critical insight I've gleaned from this journey is that humiliation is a good thing, but prolonged humiliation is selfish. Humility can grow out of humiliation only when one lets go of the humiliation. Yes, I made poor choices. And now what? What can I *do*?

The human temptation is always "to do." Especially when one has failed so miserably, so seemingly irreversibly. But there comes a point when there is nothing more a person can do except to simply *be*. To be human. God's created. God's beloved. And then to throw myself into that unconditional embrace God grants so unselfishly. And, finally, to celebrate. Throw a party! Shout for all the world to hear, "I am Elsie K. Neufeld, and that's okay! God knows me and loves me!" And if I can accept that, if only by tiny increments, then I will have realized my quest for recovery. For a few fleeting, but exhilarating moments, I will have recovered. Until the next time.

Elsie K. Neufeld is a writer, wife, mother of three, daughter, friend and part-time student. Currently, she is enrolled in the Media & Communications program at University College of the Fraser Valley. She lives in Abbotsford, B.C., and is unspeakably grateful to be alive. Psalm 139:11 has become a prayer: "If I say, 'surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,' even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you."

by Doris Dyck Froese

The Waves of Hurt

The hurting does not stop. The disappointment, the anger and feeling so alone comes in waves. At times the ebb and flow is more intense than others. I mourn, I hope. I mourn, I hope. I tire of weeping.

I used to believe in happy endings. I believed the church represented good. Mennonites were a compassionate people. I believed leaders were to be trusted, and that I was a part of a larger body of support. I have been terribly disappointed. How I hate my people. How I hate my heritage. I have been forced to become a realist.

As a young girl I remember the grave public confessions of couples involved in premarital sex. Our church moderator molested young girls. When I came forward as an adult, there was no public confession by the offender. Secret meetings with leadership. Secret counselling for the offender. I do not respect the church I grew up in, where premarital sex requires confession yet molestation does not.

I attended a conference-supported Bible college. A safe place, my parents believed. I was 20 and never had been told about sexual abuse. My Christian environment had protected me and wrongly so. I was innocent. I was naive. I trusted, and in turn I was violated sexually, emotionally and spiritually by a well-known and respected teacher, counsellor and speaker. The sacrilege of darkness masquerading as truth.

My body had responded. How I despised my femininity. I had not fought him off. I had trusted. When pressed, I had not said, "No." I believed it to be my fault. I blamed myself for years. My offender asked me to apologize to his wife, and when I did, I was told, "Go and sin no more."



"Through the course of these losses, I have discovered a few valuable individuals. They do not believe institutions should be protected at personal expense."

My holding the secret was the only deterrent for his suicide, I was told. Seven years I protected him at my emotional expense while the harassment continued. A public scenario involving another victim came out. I had been one of many.

I first spoke timidly, in anguish. I was overwhelmed by worthlessness. I still believed my offender should be protected. I was the sinful one. I betrayed a promise. I was broken.

I approached the offender's accountability group where I was explicitly told they did not want to hear the details. Men protecting men! I brought my questions to a male Christian counsellor recommended to me by a prominent area pastor. "Why did I return to my offender?" I asked. The situation was compared to prostitution. "Wasn't I enamored?" the counsellor asked. "Hasn't the offender suffered enough?" he queried.

My husband and I terminated our counselling. Almost a year after the offender had given a list of names to the conference school of women he victimized, I was contacted by another woman. The school had not bothered to contact me. I lived three blocks from campus. Who is responsible? Who will be accountable?

A team with a grand name was formed—Mediation Recovery Team. Women were able to give accounts, but whose agenda was it? We asked to be involved, but the conference thought it knew best. I felt so powerless. So victimized—again.

I disclosed my story to my pastoral staff so they could use opportunities to educate themselves. "Too busy" and "It doesn't happen in our core youth group" were some of the responses. I wept. Sermons on forgiveness and forgetting the past. "God—where are you?" I cried. "What's wrong with me?"

I wanted the sin to be named publicly. It was not an affair. Point out the role violation; the misuse of power and trust. Free me from blame. That's what I needed. My church eventually did that, but the conference took much longer. After asking repeatedly, pleading and finally threatening, the conference named sin. A shallow victory for the women. So much damage caused by the negligence and delay. The conference pastor said he understood. He did not.

The waves. At one point I was hospitalized. I could not even cope with daily routines. The church and the conference, God's hands and arms, could not say they would name sin

and speak the truth when I needed them to. I mourned. I wept. I felt alone.

Through the course of these losses, I have discovered a few valuable individuals. They do not believe institutions should be protected at personal expense. They do not tell me to forget the past. Sometimes they speak on my behalf, sometimes they simply listen. Sometimes they embrace and say, "I'm so sorry." Sometimes they weep.

The hurting has not stopped, but I have been able to share it. We mourn, we hope. We mourn, we hope. I am a realist now, and I do not stand alone.

Doris Dyck Froese enjoys sewing, art and creative writing. She and her husband, along with their two active preschoolers, now reside in British Columbia. Although no longer a conference Mennonite, Doris has chosen to attend South Abbotsford Mennonite Brethren Church.


by Carolyn Holderread Heggen

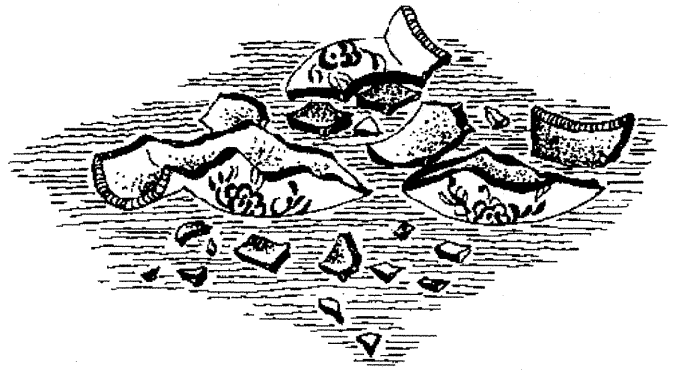
"To Whom Could I Talk?"— Spouses of Offenders

"Shedding Light in Darkness," the 1990 MCC-sponsored conference on family violence and abuse, will be remembered, I believe, as the setting where the Mennonite Church first broadly and passionately acknowledged our own Mennonite problem of abuse. Because of that conference and similar subsequent events, because of revelations of abuse of power by some of our own church leaders and pastors, and because of victims finding their voice after years of silencing and fear, we have been forced (often unwillingly) to learn a lot in the past three years.

We now have language with which to talk about sexual harassment and boundary violations. We are developing mechanisms for reporting inappropriate behaviors by church leaders. We are struggling to learn how to best walk with perpetrators through the long process of acknowledgement, repentance, restitution, forgiveness and restoration. We are coming to understand the corporate pain of congregations who have been betrayed by an abusive pastor and are identifying important stages the congregation will need to go through as it moves from denial or despair into healing. We

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are learning much about walking with victims of abuse on their healing journeys. We are recognizing the support that spouses or close friends will need as they relate to survivors.

I am happy with the level of insight and courage I sense, in general, in the Mennonite Church on the topic of abuse. I know of no other denomination that is doing better work on this issue. However, I believe there is one part of the abuse story which we have not fully understood nor adequately addressed. I refer to the unique and painful needs of the wife of the abusive pastor or leader. [My use of the term "wife of the pastor" is not because of unconscious sexism but is an intentional description of the reality of most pastoral situations in our denomination and the specific reality which I address in this article.]

In the past year I have had numerous conversations with wives and adult children of abusive Mennonite pastors and leaders. I am struck by the intensity of their pain. They are correct when they say, "We too have been victimized." Their victimization is neither caused by the survivors' disclosure nor by media reporting, but by the perpetrator's violation of his marital vows, his family trust, and the family's reputation and equilibrium.

The family of an accused church leader will often publicly respond with disbelief and denial. Some family members express outrage at those bringing accusations or at the church for "destroying a good man." Sometimes they volunteer to testify to the character of their father or spouse before abuse investigating committees.

Most families feel a desire and obligation to defend one another. This is a natural, almost involuntary response. Additionally, church leaders who have abused power within pastoral relationships have frequently had unhealthy relationships with their own families. Many have forced their wives into dependent, passive roles, keeping them fearful of losing the approval and support of their husband should they confront his behavior.

I continue to be surprised at the number of pastors' wives who, having publicly defended their husband's character and behavior, privately admit, "It doesn't surprise me at all," or "I've known for years that he was a fake," or "I knew it was just a matter of time before he got caught!" I am increasingly told by various pastors' wives, "I know my husband is behaving inappropriately with someone in the church; what am I supposed to do?" Or, "I knew for decades that he was being abusive with women in the church—but to whom could I talk?"

Numerous Mennonite pastors' wives have shared with me their anguish of many years when they knew their husband was involved in sexual misconduct. Some tried to confront his behavior, begging him to stop. One was told by her husband, "You are just a jealous, petty woman and you are hindering my ability to minister." Another was reprimanded, "If you weren't so pathetically insecure and suspicious, my ministry could thrive. You are like a millstone around my neck." Having been well indoctrinated in community expectations of "the good pastor's wife," some have spent long hours of soul searching, wondering if in fact his misbehavior was somehow her fault.

Convinced that it was his behavior which was wrong and not her attitude, one Mennonite pastor's wife sought counseling from a pastoral counselor in another denomination. At the first conjoint counseling session, the counselor apologized to the pastor for having listened to the wife's accusations. "He then told me that the problem was me, that I was not being submissive enough in the home."

Several wives of abusive pastors have told of the tremendous fear which dominated their lives for many years—fear that one of the women would "tell" and their husband would be fired and the family left incomeless, fear that knowledge of the misbehavior made them morally responsible to stop the sin, fear that the children would find out and their faith in their father and in God would be damaged, fear that they would be blamed and ostracized if others found out, fear that the victims' lives and faith were being destroyed, fear that she and her children would lose their supportive church community if the truth were known.

As I listen to these stories, I am struck with the sense of isolation and helplessness which many wives of abusive pastors feel. Many truly believe they have no one with whom they may share their pain and fear. This overlooked population in the abuse story deserves our compassion and support. I encourage us to listen attentively to their stories and to learn from them how we might be supportive of their difficult journey and be helpful to other wives of pastors.

The following are a few suggestions.

1. Let's acknowledge that a pastor's wife generally has no pastor. As congregations, let's be more creative and intentional about providing alternative pastoral care for her and her children.

2. Let's provide settings and encouragement for wives of pastors to periodically talk with each other about mutual concerns, particularly in the area of pastoral boundaries. When conducting seminars on clergy abuse and boundary setting, I often ask that wives be invited to participate.

3. Let's identify a group within the denomination (perhaps the Board of Congregational Ministries or WMSC, for example) which would focus on specific issues for wives of pastors, be available to listen to their general concerns, and provide consultation and support for specific concerns related to perceived boundary misbehavior.

4. Let's encourage our conferences and seminaries to provide more settings where spouses of pastors and pastors in training can discuss appropriate expectations for the pastor's spouse. Wives of pastors need to identify specific steps they should take if they believe their husband is involved in inappropriate behavior, particularly if he is not responsive to her private pleas for changed behavior.

5. Let's encourage the formation of a network or support group for wives and another for adult children of pastors and church leaders who have behaved improperly. They have unique, complex needs and may be a great support and encouragement to each other as they grieve and heal.

God wants us to be healed as individuals and as a people. Although the task of facing our sexual brokenness and the destructiveness of the misuse of power among us is sometimes almost overwhelming, God's grace is greater than our darkest secrets. May we keep working together at this task with courage and creativity, with wisdom and the Spirit's best fortification.

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by Wanda Derksen-Bergen

No Painless, Smooth Way

As one of my friends told me some time after the hard and dark work had begun, "There is no painless, smooth way of handling such situations."

I was part of an administrative team which found itself actively involved in terminating one of our long-term employees for professional sexual abuse. It was a heart-wrenching experience I never anticipated nor was ever prepared for in personnel management. And I knew that this was one situation where there really would be no winners, no easy redemptive models and the road would be long and tough for everyone involved.

As I reflect on the deep valleys many of us have experienced in this process, many questions come to mind as to how we as an administrative team coped with the situation. Many times I have heard the commentary from passers-by, "They may have done what had to be done but the process was very poor." I have no defense to such comments.

As the course of events began to play itself out, culminating in the termination of our employee due to his extensive history of professional sexual abuse and harassment, multiple issues faced us. Probably the question we initially most wanted an answer to was how we could set up a structure that would allow this employee to continue and yet be stopped of his activity and held accountable. After all, if we followed through with a termination, it would not only mean the end of his career, but would bring intense pain and public shame to him, his spouse and children and the rest of his family. It could also bring public shame to our agency. However, there were only dead ends to this attempt to "save" the situation and people involved. And we needed to face squarely the issue of the image of our church agency.

The time for silence was past. The information that former agency staff, pastors and other individuals had known over time now needed to be exposed. In addition to the need to hold the offender accountable, we needed to hold ourselves, as an agency and part of the General Conference Mennonite Church, accountable. There were no simple ways to do this—only difficult, hard, painful work. And the first step in

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holding ourselves accountable was to specifically name what had happened publicly and to terminate our employee.

Our choice to name the abuse and offender publicly did not go without critique. This was not done lightly and there were key reasons for it. First, as I mentioned earlier, we needed to break the silence. For it is this silence which helps to create an environment that perpetuates the abusive cycle. Naming the offender was a small way of holding the offender accountable and admitting that we as an agency were part of the environment within which the abuse occurred and thus also needed to be held accountable. Second, it was a public warning to future potential victims. Terminating an employee for inappropriate behavior does not guarantee that the behavior will cease. Third, it created an avenue for other victims to be believed, to be heard and to begin the healing process. Fourth, it gave a strong warning to others in the church and possibly even to society that we as a church will no longer tolerate this behavior nor the silence around it. It will be dealt with.

Probably one of the most difficult and yet most crucial issues to get a grasp on throughout this process was how to be sensitive to the many victims and work towards justice and healing for them. Through the process of confronting him, the offender had been given several chances, with the agency focusing on the situation more from "his side." It was now time for the agency to listen to the victims. Justice and healing needed to be goals for the offender as well, but I believe it was more difficult to respond appropriately to the whole situation from the reference point of the victims. Yet this had to be the focal point from which our decisions and

actions took place. For it was they who were violated long before any appropriate action was taken. It was they whose spirits and very soul were pierced by an evil so devastating that it would change their being forever. And as the employer of their offender, how could we begin to respond?

The first crucial step was to hear and let them know that yes, we did indeed believe them. A network among victims was initiated. An official letter of apology from the agency was sent. Financial assistance was provided for some. They were kept informed of the action we had taken with our employee. A certain process of education was initiated among our agency employees. These were small steps but necessary ones.

Participating with the offender's home church in creating an accountability group for him was one way of responding to both victim and offender. It was crucial that the frame of reference for this group be the victims, providing a safe place for their voices to be heard through advocates. I cannot emphasize enough the ongoing need for the agency/employer/church to take into account the position, experience and pain of the victims and the gross injustice that has been done to them.

Throughout the process, I made numerous phone calls to others I knew were also working with professional sexual abuse. I would have welcomed more networking—sharing of failures and helpful models, encouragement for one another, etc.

One morning shortly after "the news" had gone public, I found the tears flowing in torrents into the dishwasher. I had wept many times for and with the victims. I had wept many times for the offender and his family. But this particular morning I found myself weeping for the many other people who had now become a part of this story. I was not prepared for the broad expanse of people this would touch, nor the depth at which they, too, would feel pain. The devastation has been truly great among all of us, each in our own way. Although it is difficult to believe at times, I must tell myself that there is hope. The light will shine, even if only dimly, someday. And there may come a moment of glory in the future where we can sing with John McCutcheon, "Alleluia, the great storm is over. Lift up your wings and fly."

(Note: This article is written from the personal point of view of the writer, not as a representative of the agency.)

Wanda Derksen-Bergen is presently a homemaker and mother, living in Abbotsford, B.C.

"Being an advocate means taking risks. It means entering into a process which I cannot control, the outcome of which I cannot determine."

by Melissa Miller

Advocacy in Matters of Professional Sexual Misconduct

After seven years of counselling survivors of childhood sexual abuse (primarily incest survivors), I have begun to work with survivors of professional sexual abuse. In several cases I have acted as an advocate for them as they confront their offender and work towards healing.

In this article, I offer some learnings from advocacy with these individuals and other sexual abuse survivors. My thoughts about advocacy cluster around three themes—clarity, risk and trust.

Clarity

1. Goal-setting. Helping the survivor frame her goals is one of the first tasks. What will facilitate her healing? Does she want some form of institutional accountability and response to her abuse? Or does she want a personal acknowledgement of wrongdoing and restitution from the offender? Or perhaps

both an institutional and personal response? Does she want to warn other victims? Does she want her offender's actions to become public knowledge?

I encourage her to set goals that have a good chance of being met. For example, I would encourage her to state that she wishes to inform her offender of the harm he has caused her. She has more control of this goal than an expectation that the offender will seek treatment.

2. Gathering information. I can provide education to help her make informed choices. This includes literature, community resources, legal options, sharing stories and possibly networking with other survivors. I can offer her options, like confronting through the institution, letter writing, and (eventual) face-to-face confrontation. I am clear about what I do and do not know. Together we gather information.

3. Survivor-directed. I am directed by what would be healing for her. I provide choices along the way, like "Do you want to call the conference office for its sexual abuse policy or do you want me to call?" or "Do you want me to write an accompanying letter to go with your letter or not?" or "Do you want to meet this other survivor alone or do you want me to be present?" It is important for her to be actively involved in her own healing, both in doing what she can and in knowing when she can ask others to carry out tasks for support.

4. Internal clarity. I need to be clear inside of myself and with the survivor about my role. At points I have been both the survivor's counsellor and advocate. At other times, survivors have asked me to advocate for them and have had other persons who are supporting them as counsellor or spiritual director. Professional sexual abuse can be quite complex with multiple victims, years of abuse, layers of institutional structures and the media. The more complex the abuse situation, the more preferable it is that I take one role rather than multiple roles.

I work out with the survivor the details of my role. Will I attend meetings (of confrontation, or with institutional representatives) with her? Will we have planning and debriefing meetings? Do I call her to offer support? Will I get paid for my role? (So far, the survivor has paid the hourly rate of the counselling agency where I work.)

I may experience discomfort with her choice. It is important to listen to this internal disquiet until I can understand what it means. I may discuss it with her or in other ways seek to



Central America

If the last issue of *Report* sparked your interest in reading more on Central America, here are two books recommended by participants of the MCC women's tour to Central America:

Don't Be Afraid, Gringo: A Honduran Woman Speaks from the Heart is the autobiography

of Elvia Alvarado, a poor campesina who became the leader of her people's struggle for justice. She tells the story with clarity, honesty and courage. (San Francisco: The Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1987).

Central America Inside Out: The Essential Guide to Its Societies, Politics and

Economies by Tom Barry is an excellent general resource on current conditions in Central America. It is accessible, organized by country with sections on trends, government and politics, military, economy, society and environment, foreign influence. (New York: The Resource Center, 1991).

resolve it. I will sometimes proceed without feeling 100 percent comfortable because I believe in survivor-directed healing. I also must declare my limits, and it is possible that a survivor will want to pursue a path on which I cannot accompany her. If that happens, I would seek to affirm her in whatever way I can, and assist her in getting the resources she needs to move on.

I must protect myself from being too isolated or overwhelmed in the process. This means ensuring that I have the resources and balance I need to maintain my clear, centered helping role.

Risk

Being an advocate means taking risks. It may mean leaving the familiarity of my office to support the survivor in unfamiliar settings or in the presence of others who are angry or unsympathetic or dominating. It may mean being available at unusual hours. It means entering into a process which I cannot control, the outcome of which I cannot determine. It may mean harsh surprises, which wear down one's spirit. There may be times of bleak confusion and frightening loss of direction. It may also mean grace-filled moments, like genuine sorrow and repentance, freely offered restitution, miraculous compassion and forgiveness, and the healing of souls.

Trust

I respond to the risk-taking that is a necessary part of the advocacy process by building trust. I encourage the survivor to strengthen herself, believing that her empowerment is essential. I "trust the process," which means letting go of having to control everything, allowing others the freedom to respond as they will, and believing that healing is possible and that good will happen. I calm myself, seeking to align with God and stay centered in the justice and compassion that I believe is at the heart of God. I pray.

Melissa Miller is a homemaker, a counselor at Shalom Counseling Service, and an elder at Mannheim (Ont.) Mennonite Church. She and her husband Dean Peachey are parents of a son and live in Kitchener, Ont.

by Melissa Miller

A Brief Look at a Mediation Model

In advocating with survivors of sexual abuse, I sometimes offer them the mediation model that is available through Community Justice Initiatives (CJI), an agency in Kitchener, Ont., that has 10 years of experience working with survivors and offenders of sexual violence. CJI also has a long history of providing mediation and began providing mediation to survivors of sexual abuse several years ago "when they began asking for it," according to Mark Yantzi, who along with Maryann Sharpe, staffs the service (which is free of charge).

During those years, there have been 15-20 mediation cases, most of which involved sibling incest. There have been several cases of professional sexual misconduct. Yantzi sees the model as providing an opportunity for the empowerment of both survivor and perpetrator. It is empowering for the survivor to confront her offender and to identify her needs for healing (apology, restitution). It is empowering for the perpetrator to acknowledge his wrongdoing and take steps towards restitution.

Yantzi asserts that one has to understand the power dynamics involved in abuse cases and proceed very carefully when mediating. He or Sharpe meet with the survivor to determine her goals and plan what course is comfortable for her. She may have anyone she wishes present throughout the process. She makes choices along the way about how she will participate and how the process will unfold. They do not do mediation with children or young adults; in most cases the abuses that occurred are some years in the past.

The mediator initiates contact with the offender and meets separately with him. The offender is also encouraged to have support persons present if he wishes. Yantzi believes that such support makes it more possible for the offender to take risks and make changes.

The mediation proceeds only if parties are willing and if there is sufficient "common ground." (If the offender denies the abuse, there is not enough common ground.) The mediation may take place face-to-face, or the survivor and offender may mediate through the staff member, depending on what the survivor wants. The staff attempts to assist the parties in

coming to an agreement that both parties accept. Some of the agreements have included a written apology, a financial settlement and/or a commitment to seek treatment. In most cases a successful outcome is realized. If the mediation is unsuccessful, survivors have the option of seeking justice through the courts.

(In this article the writer uses the female pronoun for survivors and male for offenders, but notes that there are male survivors and female perpetrators.)

Resources: Books/Packets

Crossing the Boundary: Sexual Abuse by Professionals. Mennonite Central Committee, Box 500, Akron, PA 17501. 1991.

An introduction to issues of sexual abuse by professionals, including pastors. Explains the pattern of sexual abuse by professionals and discusses ways to prevent and address it. Packet costs \$8.

Fortune, Marie M. *Is Nothing Sacred? When Sex Invades the Pastoral Relationship.* San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989.

This is the story of one congregation whose pastor is involved in abusive sexual relationships. In case study format, the book details the events that led up to six women confronting the pastor and the congregation's response. Provides helpful analysis and suggestions for appropriate response.

Lebacqz, Karen, and Ronald G. Barton. *Sex in the Parish.* Berkeley, CA: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991.

An excellent study that explores the complex, volatile and inescapable dynamics of human sexuality within the pastor/parishioner relationship, and develops a useful framework for establishing ethical sexual behavior in the congregation.

Rediger, G. Lloyd. *Ministry and Sexuality: Cases, Counseling and Care.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990.

Addresses a wide range of clergy sexual problems. Includes case studies, counseling techniques, and guidelines for prevention and support for clergy.

Rutter, Peter. *Sex in the Forbidden Zone.* Los Angeles: Tarcher, 1986. In this landmark study, Rutter exposes the pattern of men in positions of power—therapists, doctors, clergy, teachers, lawyers, etc.—using that power to sexually exploit those under their care or tutelage. He explains why those in power are attracted to forbidden zone relationships and why sex in such relationships is so destructive.

Resources: Videos

"Choosing the Light." Greater Milwaukee Synod of the ELCA, 1212 S. Layton Blvd, Milwaukee, WI 53215.

"Not in My Church." Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence, 1914 North 34th St., Suite 105, Seattle, WA 98103.


by Gayle Gerber Koontz

Reading Suggestions for "Women Doing Theology"

We have asked presenters for the upcoming conference, "Mennonite Voices in Dialogue: Women Doing Theology," to write notes to our readers, suggesting reading you might do in preparation for the conference. Following are suggestions from Gayle Gerber Koontz of Elkhart, Ind., who will address the topic of "Forgiveness." For more information on the conference see the ad in this issue.

I've been reading several stimulating books that I would like to pass on to Christian feminists planted in Mennonite and related churches:

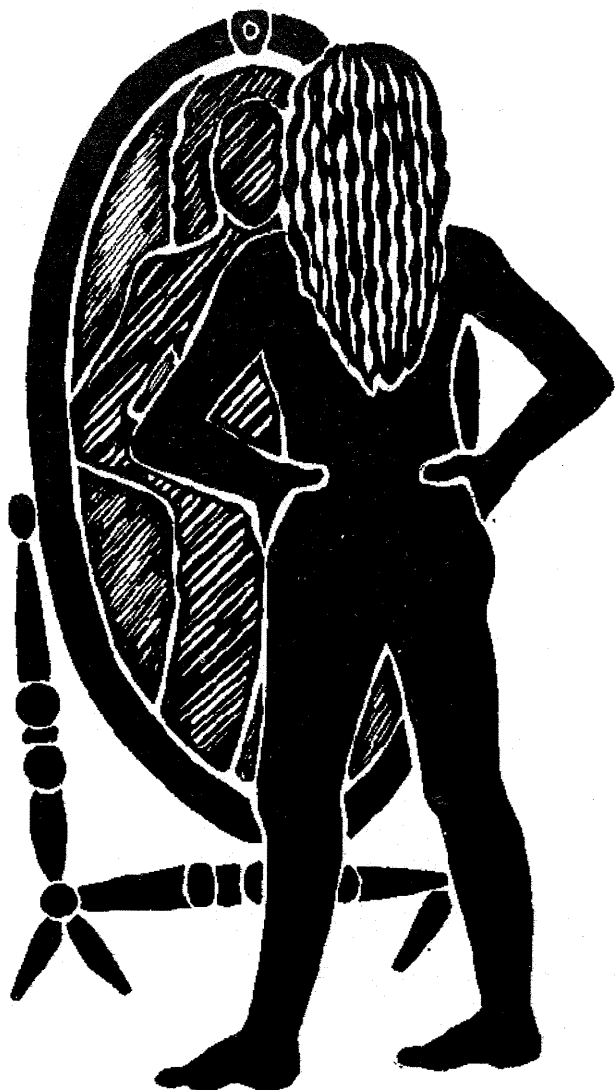
Sally McFague's newest book, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* (Fortress, 1993) develops her earlier suggestion that we see and respond to the world as God's body. She looks at major theological issues through this partial but "neglected" and "illuminating" organic understanding of God and the world. Her approach, "deepened and qualified by...the liberating, healing and inclusive love of Christ" sketches a theology and spirituality for our time of ecological crisis.

Another new book, *Christ in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church* by Letty M. Russell (Westminster, 1993), creatively links theology of mission, hospitality and feminist leadership. Lifting up the biblical image of table fellowship, she encourages an understanding of the church as community gathered around a "table that is round" rather than rectangular with a "head." She explores round table partnership as a leadership option for the church and welcomes table spirituality as foundational for a missionary church.

Women in Travail and Transition: A New Pastoral Care, an interdenominational collection of essays edited by Maxine Glaz and Jeanne Stevenson Moessner (Fortress, 1991) seeks

to "revive the church's capacity to give care to women" by recognizing and responding to women's experiences of anguish—caught between work and love; sexual abuse and shame; body-related spiritual needs; battered bodies; depression; changing life-styles and culture. Contributors also reflect on psychology of women and pastoral care and suggest a new model for pastoral care drawing from the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Gayle Gerber Koontz is dean and associate professor of theology at the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary. The two areas in which she has done the most sustained work are Christian feminist theology and Christian theology and religious pluralism.



Book review

A Journey Into the Light

Life After 50: A Positive Look at Aging in the Faith Community, edited by Katie Funk Wiebe (Faith and Life Press, Newton, Kan., 1993, 169 pages)

Time changes us; it makes us grow older. "We're all growing older and have been since we were born." That's fine, at least for the first 20 or 30 years of life. But as gray hairs and wrinkles show up, we begin to resist the marks of time on our lives. In a culture that glorifies youth, aging is seen as regressive. How do we in the faith community respond to aging and to the mature adult?

Life After 50 invites us to dialogue on faith and aging in the church. Katie Funk Wiebe and eight other authors challenge us to see aging as a spiritual journey of growth toward new meaning and hope. "Aging is not an enemy to be conquered, but a friend to be cultivated." While the authors do not underestimate the difficulties related to growing older, their overarching concern is for finding richness and purpose in the later part of life.

The book includes basic information about growing older from sociologists, gerontologists and the Bible. It addresses such issues as negative stereotypes, retirement, dealing with losses, medical ethical issues and death. The book highlights the contributions mature adults can make to the church.

The book is directed primarily at the increasing number of North Americans in their 50s and older. However, a dialogue on aging is a reflection on life and therefore relates to all of us. The book's informal style and discussion questions make it ideal for use in Sunday school or small group settings (you might even try it in your youth group!). Though I am well under 50, I found it profitable personal reading. It is also a valuable resource for those who relate to older adults.

The authors speak in the context of North American society, which takes many structured support systems for the aged for granted. A discussion from the perspective of poor people in less developed countries might address another host of issues.

Aging is challenge and grace. The authors meaningfully explore this tension. They encourage and inspire us to see life as a journey into the light of eternity.

—Reviewed by Elfrieda Lepp-Kaethler, Yalve Sanga, Paraguay



As part of her CPC training in Chicago, Lena Siegers participated in a campaign to free Mordecai Vanunu, an Israeli prisoner of conscience.

Meet Lena Siegers

At age 50, Lena Martin Siegers is ready for a new and exciting challenge—beginning a three-year term as a member of the first Christian Peacemaking Corps (CPC). CPC is an 8-person team, trained in peacemaking skills, nonviolence and mediation, available on a full-time basis to be sent as peacemakers to emergency situations of conflict and areas of militarization, in North America and overseas. Its members serve through Christian Peacemaker Teams, a unique initiative among the Mennonite and Church of the Brethren denominations.

As a CPC member, Lena recently completed four weeks of intensive training in conflict resolution and mediation, peacemaking strategy, spiritual disciplines, Bible study and communication skills. With the formal training completed at the end of October, Lena has headed back to Ontario where she will be living with a family in Hamilton and be an associate member of the Hamilton Mennonite Voluntary Service Unit.

Why is Lena ready to give up the comfort of home and family for such an assignment? She grew up in a warm, loving Old Order Mennonite family, who were generous in sharing their limited resources with needy people. She has always been concerned for the poor and has worked with mothers on welfare and participated in ministries of peace whenever she could. When the church secretary at Brussels Mennonite Fellowship received mail about Christian Peacemaker Teams' new program, she handed it to Lena. After conversations with friends and family and a good deal of prayer, Lena decided she was ready to answer the call to this difficult but important work of peace.

Several women's groups within the Mennonite and Brethren denominations are joining together to support Lena's work as a member of the Christian Peacemaker Corps. Women's Concerns will report regularly on her work as a peacemaker during the next year. If you are interested in more information or would like to provide financial support for Lena's work, contact Jane Miller, CPT, 2025 Nicollet Ave #203, Minneapolis, MN 55404 (612 870-1501).

—by Lois Kenagy and Jane Miller

Women in Ministry

- **Lorene Moore** of Canton, Ill., began a one-year term as interim pastor at First Mennonite Church of Indianapolis, Ind., on Sept. 1.

- **Dorothy Martens** began serving as associate pastor of family ministries at Sardis (B.C.) Community Church on August 1. She will work primarily in pastoral care and counseling.

- **Christine Juhnke** is serving a one-year term as pastor at Salina (Kan.) Mennonite Church.



Mennonite

Voices in

women doing theology

June 23-25, 1994
Bluffton College
Bluffton, Ohio

Sponsored by:
MCC Women's Concerns
Bluffton College

This conference has been organized to provide a forum for Mennonite and Brethren in Christ women to work on theological issues and to provide a meeting place for women and men who are interested in exploring the emerging theological voices of women. The format of the conference is based on dialogue. Six Mennonite and Brethren in Christ women are preparing papers, which will be published and distributed to participants prior to the conference. There will also be a half-day for special interest workshops and caucuses, which will include a caucus for women theologians and scholars.

This conference follows the 1992 conference, "In a Mennonite Voice: Women Doing Theology," held at Conrad Grebel College, Waterloo, Ontario.

Conference papers:

Forgiveness:

Gayle Gerber Koontz
Dorothy Jean Weaver

Atonement:

Rachel Reesor
Mary H. Schertz

New Vision for Anabaptist Feminism:

Wilma Ann Bailey
Pamela Klassen

Registration

Pre-registration is required.

Lodging (three nights) and meals: \$43.75

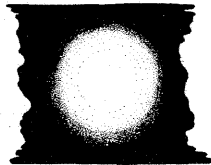
- * Conference registration, including conference papers

Early registration (by March 1): \$54

After March 1: \$64

For registration form write: MCC Women's Concerns
Box 500
Akron, PA 17501-0500

For more information or to confirm early registration, call:
Tina Mast Burnett, MCC Women's Concerns, 717-859-3889.



Illustrations in this issue were drawn by Teresa Pankratz of Chicago. Please do not reproduce without permission.

News and Verbs

- **Women's Concerns 20th anniversary** was celebrated in a variety of ways. MCC Manitoba Women's Concerns Committee held a special evening meeting of storytelling and celebration. MCC Ontario Women's Concerns passed out anniversary cake to delegates at the MCC Ontario annual meeting. In British Columbia a special newsletter was published. Lancaster, Pa., women gathered to discuss an issue of *Women's Concerns Report*. In North Carolina a group of women gathered for an evening focused on women and peacemaking.
- Goshen College is accepting applications for two positions: a tenure-track position as **teacher of U.S.**

WOMEN'S CONCERNS REPORT is published bimonthly by the MCC Committee on Women's Concerns. The committee, formed in 1973, believes that Jesus Christ teaches equality of all persons. By sharing information and ideas, the committee strives to promote new relationships and corresponding supporting structures in which men and women can grow toward wholeness and mutuality. Articles and views presented in REPORT do not necessarily reflect official positions of the Committee on Women's Concerns.

WOMEN'S CONCERNS REPORT is edited by Kristina Mast Burnett. Layout by Janice Wiebe Ollenburger. Correspondence and address changes should be sent to Kristina Mast Burnett, Women's Concerns, MCC, P.O. Box 500, Akron, PA 17501-0500.

U.S. residents may send subscriptions to the above address. Canadian residents may send subscriptions to MCC Canada, 50 Kent Avenue, Kitchener, ON N2G 3R1.

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history, beginning as early as fall 1994 (teaching responsibilities may include courses in world civilization and women's history); a two-year appointment in the **chemistry department**, beginning August 1994. Contact: Dr. John Eby, Academic Dean, Goshen College, Goshen IN 46526; 219-535-7660.

- On October 17, the Ft. Garry Mennonite Brethren Church in Winnipeg, Man., became a gathering place for 150 M.B. church members who "felt uncomfortable with the outcome of the vote on women in leadership," at the July 1993 General Conference. At that time 61% of delegates voted against a recommendation that the conference permit a "diversity of conviction and practice in the appointment of women to pastoral leadership." Much of the Fort Garry meeting focused on approaches that could be used to express **affirmation of women in leadership** and convey this stance to others in the denomination. Those present stressed "a strong commitment to change grounded in a belief in biblical equality of women and men, but also in a love and respect for the M.B. Conference and for those who may hold opposing views on this issue."
- Members of the Mennonite Church and General Conference Environmental Task Force are planning a **1995 creation summit** in hopes of making the health of the environment a higher priority for Mennonites. Jocene Meyer of Fresno, Ohio, is task force chair.



**Mennonite
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